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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a study which examined schools and libraries in Sweden. During a five-month period 40 libraries and 150 classrooms were surveyed to assess the adequacy of their facilities, budgets, collections, staffs, and services. It was found that: (1) the size of the school library facilities depended on the type of library and the size of the population being served; (2) facilities that were constructed during the 1960s placed the library in the center of the school in an unenclosed structure, which presents problems with uncontrollable noise levels as well as a certain amount of collection loss; (3) the collection emphasis is on fiction for recreational reading; (4) many nonfiction books are not catalogued in the library, but are housed in classrooms and teacher workrooms; (5) nonprint and print materials are not integrated in the collections; and (6) two of the most critical issues in Swedish school libraries are not enough personnel to staff the libraries and a lack of specialized training for school librarians. It is recommended that the library program in Swedish schools be analyzed, and eventually, coordinated with the school curriculum to expand library services. (MAB)

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Swedish School Library Programs: An American View

by
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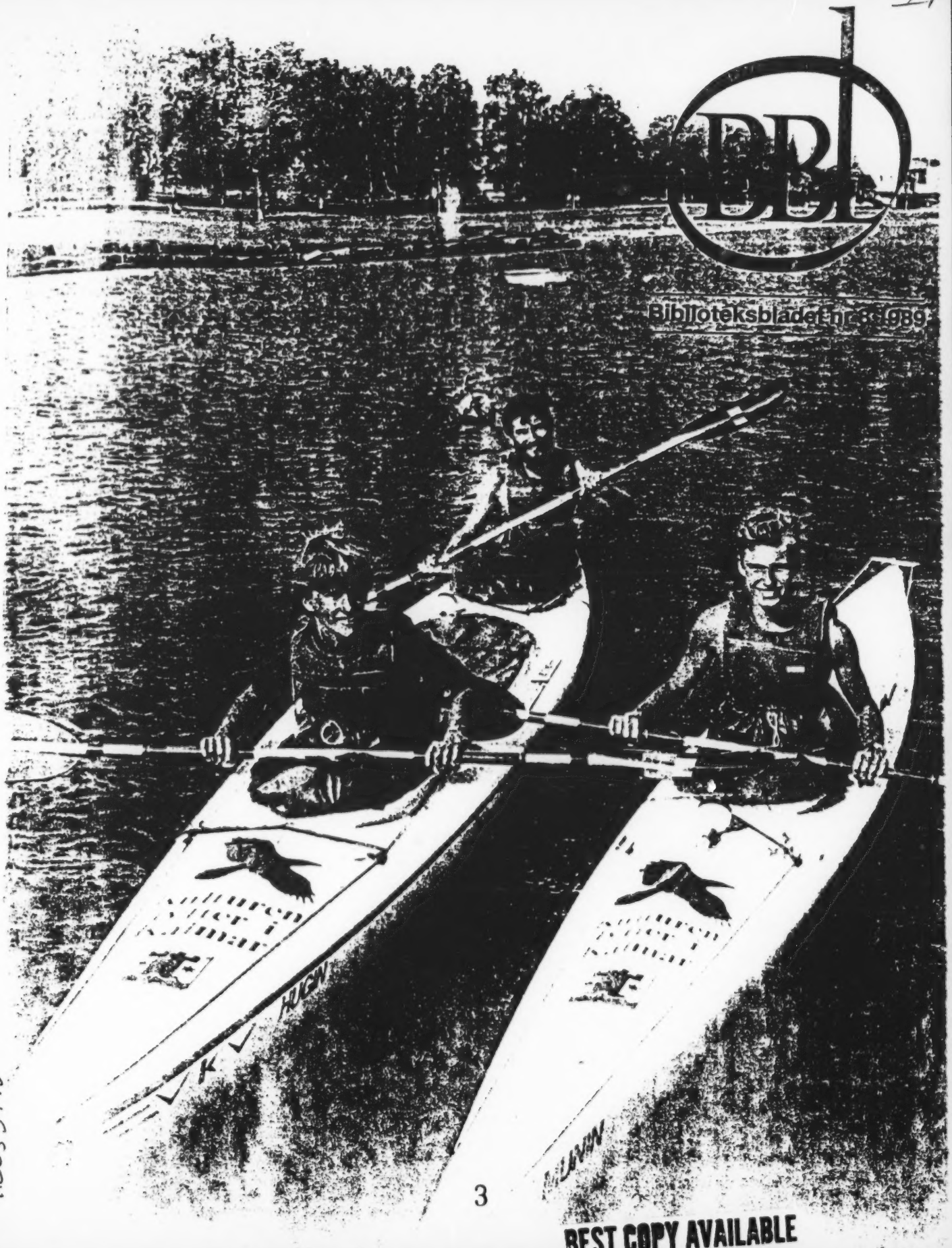

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SKOLBIBLIOTEK som

Service, den viktigaste beståndsdelen i ett skolbibliotek, är beroende av kvalitén pa lokaler, budget, samlingar och personal. Det menar Doktor Valerie J Downes, bibliotekschef vid Morton West High School i Berwyn, Illinois, USA, och definierar service som planeringsprogram med aktiviteter som hjälper eleverna att bli trygga och kunniga informationsanvändare.

Under 1988/89 tillbringade Valerie J Downes fem månader vid Västerbottens länsbibliotek som s k Library/Book Fellow och studerade främst skolbibliotek. Hon har mer än 25 års erfarenhet av att utveckla och genomföra skolbiblioteksprogram i USA, såväl i grundskolor som gymnasier.

Ett välutvecklat samarbete mellan bibliotekarie, lärare och elev kan tyckas tidsödande, skriver Valerie J Downes i nedanstående artikel för Biblioteksbladet men försäkrar, att det är mycket givande och effektivt när lektionerna systematiskt förbereds på det sättet.

Först när ett väl utvecklat undersökande arbetssätt har införts på alla stadier och i alla ämnen är Sveriges ungdomar väl rustade för att kunna finna, analysera och använda information.

Swedish School Library Programs an American View

In response to publicity from the United States Information Agency, the Lansbibliotek in Västerbotten submitted a proposal requesting an American librarian to visit schools and libraries in the country. Of the seventy-five proposals received by the USIA, Västerbotten was one of the ten selected for funding.

The American Library Association, administrator of the program, advertised for librarians to fill the position of "Library/Book Fellow". The program was officially launched in Sweden upon my arrival in Umea on October 2, 1988.

In the five months spent i Västerbotten, I visited forty libraries including two factories and one in a prison. Two days were spent om bokbussen visiting small villages and country schools. I visited 150 classrooms, speaking English to students of all ages (including Kom-Vux) about American books, reading habits and culture.

To achieve my goal of developing a systematic approach to studying school libraries, I decided to use the survey prepared by The Center for Education Statistics of the United States Department of Education and summarized in Appendix A of **Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs**, developed by the American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, published in 1988. This survey model enabled me to gather qualitative and quantitative data on twentythree school library programs in Västerbotten.

Following my five months in Västerbotten, I spent another three weeks talking to librarians, administrators and teachers about **Information Power**. This document is the latest in a developmental series of publications concerning school library standards in the United States. It embodies a philosophy of school library program development that is universally applicable.

Successful school library programs are composed of adequate facilities, budgets, collections, staffs and services. The survey endeavored to assess school library programs in all of these areas according to type and size of school. Some of these findings are reflected here as program components are discussed.

Each school library was housed in a place of its own, rather than sharing a room with other activities. The size of the rom depended on the type of library and size of population being served. The location of the library within the school is directly related to the extent of its utilization.

Those schools built in the 1960's placed the library in the center of the school, but too often it was not enclosed, but consisted of bookshelves in a hallway. Working in these libraries quickly demonstrated the flaws in this design. First of all, it is difficult to study in this type of facility because of the distractions of noise and people passing through on their way to other places. It is also challenging to control the circulation in these open areas because many books are lost due to the temptation of easy accessibility.

Requests by librarians to enclose these open libraries were heard around the world and many methods were used to give these areas an illusion of privacy and quiet. Usually, the bookcases were moved around to create an enclosure. The central location of these libraries is a "plus", and if they were enclosed,

their full potential for utilization could be realized.

The collection budget for the top twenty school libraries surveyed average about 89 SEK per patron. The number of patrons was determined by the number of students in the school being served by the Skolbibliotek or the population in the community being served by the Folk-Skolbibliotek.

The collections of materials in Swedish school libraries consist primarily of printed materials. Of the top twenty school libraries surveyed, the average number of books per patron is 21 and the average of magazine titles per 100 patrons i 12. The number of printed materials in the collection is quite high compared to school library holdings in the United States.

Theese figures are somewhat skewed by the fact that apparently periodic inventories of the collections are seldom undertaken. Since inventory is a very time-consuming task, it could be accomplished more quickly and efficiently if some type of collection automation were in place.

Two differences were found in the collection of materials in school libraries in Sweden and in the United States. In Sweden, the collection emphasis is on fiction for recreational reading. In fact, many non-fiction books are not cataloged into the library, but housed in classrooms and teacher workrooms.

The other difference is in the use and organization of nonprint materials. In the United States curriculum, many audiovisual materials are used. These materials and the equipment needed to effectively use them are organized and circulated through the library. Initially, incorporating print, non-print and equipment into a traditional program and turning it into a multi-media, readily-acessible collection is a monumental task. However, teachers and students greatly benefit by being able to quickly locate all materials through the library's card catalog and with the assistance of the library's staff.

Staffing of school libraries is a world-wide concern and Sweden is no exception. The two most critical issues are not enough personnel to staff the libraries and lack of specialized training for school librarians.

Not unlike the United States, in Sweden, personnel employment is the most expensive line item in schools' budgets. Many strategies are devised to trim the number of staff in a school, and often, it is the school library which becomes the under-staffed program in order to save money.

When there is not enough staff in the library, only the basic tasks of selection, cataloging, processing and organization of materials can be accomplished, occasionally taking away from the library's prime goal as a service agency.

The other problem is the lack of training of school librarians. A school librarian is a unique professional: a combination of librarian and teacher. Practically speaking, those studying library science should be required to take coursework in Education. Likewise, those studying to become teachers should be required to take several courses in Library Science. In this way, the similarities of goals and the uniqueness of roles could be explored.

Today, with limited budgets for personnel and little training for school librarians, there is one recommendation, if implemented, would go far in developing quality school library programs staffed by personnel with an understanding of both the library and school professions. This recommendation is the hiring, by the Kommun school boards, of a person with library and education experience to be responsible for the development of a long range plan for school library programs in conjunction with the national curriculum plan. This plan, considering cautious budgetary concerns, would include short and long term goals and action plans for implementation in collaboration with the curriculum plans for the 1990's that are in process of being developed.

Service, the most important element of a school library program, is dependent on the quality of facility, budget, collection and staff. Service is best defined as a planning program of activities which assists students to become comfortable, knowledgeable users of information. To effectively develop the service component, librarians must understand the curriculum of the total school program, work closely with teachers, know what is being taught in the classroom and be aware of the information in textbook used by teachers.

Understanding the total school curriculum allows the librarians to organize a sequential program of library usage spanning each grade level in the school. To implement this program, the librarian would meet with a group representing each grade level or subject being taught in a school. At this meeting, decisions would be made as to what research skills and cognitive use of informations students should acquire in each grade or subject. A scope and sequence chart showing skills to be taught at each grade and subject would

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be the natural outcome of this meeting.

The librarian would work closely with all the teachers at each grade or subject level to discover where these skills would best be taught within the teacher's own curriculum organization. These skills could be team taught by both teacher and librarian to demonstrate library utilization as an integral part of every day activities.

Knowing what is being taught in the classroom is very helpful to the librarian in suggesting when and where certain skills could be taught.

The librarian needs to be knowledgeable about the contents of textbooks for two reasons. First, this knowledge will help the librarian to understand the curriculum and to decide where the teaching of specific research and information skills would best fit. Second, the textbook is a valuable source for collection development. Library materials should be ordered with support and complement the subjects being covered in the textbooks.

This approach to developing library/student/teacher interaction is very efficient once it is in place. The planning with teachers can be time consuming, but once the lessons are prepared the implementation is systematic and very rewarding. The librarian has the satisfaction of working with teachers to help students develop library habits that should be useful to them throughout their lives.

Obviously, the program of service suggested here cannot be implemented immediately. But, Swedish school libraries and the personnel who manage them are ready to move forward. The components are in place: facilities, budgets, staff and collection development.

It is time for systematic planning to begin. The Kommun school boards should appoint a knowledgeable person to be responsible for school library development. The library program in every school in the Kommun should be surveyed and a plan developed to coordinate the existing activities and train the librarians and teachers to work together for future development and changes.

Foton: Mats Matsson

Expansion of the service component would extend the present goals of school library programs. What could be more rewarding than having those goals written into the state curriculum for the 1990's? Librarians and other educators should consider moving this one step further to develop a program of systematic research skills integrated into the curriculum at all grade and subject levels. Only then, will Sweden's youth be better prepared to enter the 21st century armed with strong skills in the ability to find, analyze and use information. ■

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